

Travel

Do not drive until cleared by your doctor. If you must travel, do not sit for long periods of time. Get up and walk around at least every 45 minutes.



Diet

You may experience a diminished appetite for about a month. It is important that you eat enough to aid in the healing process. Your surgeon may send you home on a regular diet with the intent of reducing your fat and cholesterol intake once your appetite returns. If you have questions about your diet, ask the dietician before discharge.

Alcohol/Tobacco Use

We do not recommend consumption of alcoholic beverages during the first month of your recovery. After that, you may be allowed an alcoholic drink occasionally. First check with your doctor or pharmacist. There are a few heart medications that are affected by alcohol, such as Coumadin.

You should not use tobacco in any form, including pipe-smoking, cigars or chewing tobacco.

Use of tobacco will increase your chance of having a heart attack.

Smoking (or Tobacco) causes:

- ♥ Constriction or narrowing of the coronary arteries, thus decreasing blood flow to the heart.
- ♥ An increase in blood pressure and heart rate, which causes your heart to work harder.
- ♥ An increase in the level of carbon monoxide in your blood and deprives your heart of the oxygen it needs.

Angina

It is hoped that the heart bypass surgery will eliminate or reduce angina. Angina occurs when there is not enough blood flow through your coronary arteries to meet the demand from your working heart muscle. You may experience discomfort in your chest, arms, back, neck or jaws. This discomfort may or may not be similar to the discomfort you had before your heart bypass surgery. Angina could be brought on by exertion or stress, and possibly relieved by rest and/or nitroglycerin under the tongue.

- ♥ If you suspect that you are having angina:
 - ♥ Stop what you are doing immediately.
 - ♥ Sit down and rest.
- ♥ If the discomfort does not go away after resting a few minutes, then:
 - ♥ Put a nitroglycerin tablet under your tongue.
 - ♥ Wait 5 minutes.
 - ♥ You may repeat this **three times**.
 - ♥ **If the discomfort continues, call 9-1-1.**
- ♥ If you have angina, the following may help minimize the frequency of symptoms:
 - ♥ Rest for 30-60 minutes after eating.
 - ♥ Pace your physical activity.
 - ♥ Avoid exercise in temperatures above 85 degrees or below 32 degrees.
 - ♥ Avoid strenuous lifting, pushing or pulling.
 - ♥ In some cases, your doctor may instruct you to use a nitroglycerin tablet under your tongue prior to performing activities that typically cause you to experience angina.

Sexual Relations

Sexual relations may be resumed after two to four weeks when you feel able. Helpful hints to remember:

- ♥ Avoid intercourse when tired, after a meal, or in extreme temperatures.
- ♥ Use positions that require the least physical exertion and the least amount of stress on the breastbone.
- ♥ Rest before and after intercourse.
- ♥ Discuss with your surgeon if you:
 - ♥ Develop chest discomfort.
 - ♥ Develop persistent feelings of extreme fatigue.
 - ♥ Develop palpitations or shortness of breath that persists 15 minutes or longer.

Emotions

You may experience a wide range of emotions following heart surgery. You may be depressed, irritable, scared, angry or sad during your recovery. These feelings are normal. Be patient with yourself and your family. These moods will subside as you recover and your heart heals. Talk with your family and friends about your emotions and allow them to share their feelings with you. If these feelings are extreme or prolonged, discuss them with your surgeon.



Heart Valve Surgery

If you have had surgery on your heart valve(s), you must take an antibiotic before any surgical or dental procedure. Call your physician when a procedure is planned and inform your dentist of your heart valve surgery. Also inform any physician or dentist if you are taking Coumadin (warfarin).

Report to your doctor if you have:

- ♥ New onset of angina, chest discomfort or shortness of breath.
- ♥ An increase in frequency, severity and/or duration of angina and shortness of breath.
- ♥ A consistent decrease in the numbers achieved while using the incentive spirometer.
- ♥ Problems with incision(s).
- ♥ New or increased swelling of your feet or ankles.
- ♥ Marked or unusual fatigue.
- ♥ Severe weakness, light-headedness, dizziness, fainting.
- ♥ A sudden weight gain. Weigh daily – if you suddenly gain 3 to 5 pounds in less than a week, notify your surgeon.
- ♥ Skipped heartbeats, palpitations or awareness of a “too fast or too slow heart beat.”
- ♥ A temperature of greater than 100.5 degrees.
- ♥ Pain or tenderness in your lower legs.
- ♥ Any questions.

Remember

- ♥ We want you to return to a healthy state.
- ♥ Give yourself time for your body to heal.
- ♥ Take your medications as instructed.
- ♥ Keep your appointments with your doctor.
- ♥ Slowly increase your activity level.
- ♥ Keep a positive attitude, and be willing to make lifestyle changes as necessary.
- ♥ Be patient with yourself, and don't give up on making those changes.
- ♥ Accept your family and friends as your partners in recovery and rehabilitation. They want to help you and are concerned about you. Their support and encouragement are important to you.